

How to Re-Start Your Small Group

Believe it or not, Ctrl + Alt + Delete works in ministry, as well.

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Many groups take a break from their normal pattern of meeting over the summer, either by design or simply because of people's hectic schedules. And that's fine. Some groups (and leaders) do need a break. However, many leaders have found that it can be harder to re-start after one of these breaks than they realize. If you're in that situation, you need to do some intentional things to get your group back on track.

Think of it like a re-boot on your computer. You know what three keys you press in succession to re-start your computer, right? CTRL + ALT + DEL. So I am encouraging you to CTRL + ALT + DEL your small group. Here's how.

CTRL—Take Control of Your Group

If your group is going to get back together, it will happen because you, the group leader, took control of things and decided it was time to get back in the groove again. Don't wait for others to let you know the group should get back together, or to manufacture the excitement and enthusiasm for re-starting. You are the leader; it has to come from you. The first thing to do is set a definite date for when the group will resume its normal pattern of meetings. You might be tempted to try and contact the group and see when they want to get back together. Don't do it! It can be close to impossible to get in touch with everyone, and you can't expect people to call you or e-mail you back. So take control. Set a date. And unless you discover that you'll be the only one there, don't change it.

ALT—Have an Alternative Meeting for Your First Time Back

Don't have just your normal meeting the first time you gather back. Do something different and fun that will catch people's interest and have them looking forward to being back together. Here are some suggestions:

- Have a game night in your usual meeting place.
- Go out and play some games—putt-putt golf, go karts, laser tag, bowling, etc.
- Have a picnic.
- Dinner and a movie.

- Set up a game of kickball, whiffle ball, or volleyball.
- Go to a minor or major league baseball game.
- Eat at a restaurant.
- Set up a potluck dinner.
- Have a video-game competition.
- Set up a ping-pong or corn-hole tournament.

Get the idea? Use one of these ideas or do something else. Just do something!

Once you are past this initial re-gathering time, you will probably want to re-visit your expectations for the group—and allow group members to do the same. Ask the group how they would like things to be different and what some goals for the upcoming year might be.

DEL—Don't Be Afraid to Delete Members from the Group

Life happens. We go through seasons where things change. Just because someone was in your group before doesn't mean they'll continue on. Groups can be held hostage because they keep waiting for one person or one couple to re-engage. It may never happen and the group fizzles. Groups in that situation are much better off letting those people go and recruiting someone new. And that's really okay. It's healthy. Maybe one day the original person will come back, or maybe they'll join another group. Either way, don't take it personally. Just invest in the people you have before you.

So there you have it: CTRL + ALT + DEL your group and get off to a great "re-start!"